

BEDS VMCC NEWS

KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN



Chris Illman's trusty 1930 Rudge – see article inside

Don't trudge it – Rudge it

EDITORIAL

Retired people have a habit of saying they don't know how they ever found time to go to work; I'm beginning to see what they mean. So please excuse me if this issue looks like it's been put together a little hastily. But I'm not complaining – better busy than bored. And busy is exactly what this summer looks like it's going to be, with lots of events being revived and, unfortunately, inevitable clashes of dates.

Many thanks to this week's contributors: Chris, David, Neil, Tim and Will. As always, please keep them coming to fill the remaining issues before (hopefully) we can meet up again at club nights.

Bryan

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Beds Section News

MIDWEEK RUNS

The next run will be on Thursday, 3rd June. I shall be organising it, but I haven't yet worked out a route. Start and finish will be at the "Stop 'n Stuff" café at Pure Triumph, Woburn - 10.15 for 10.30 departure. It's unlikely that I'll have time to produce a route sheet, so we'll follow-my-leader or, if the group is large, use the drop-off system. No need to book, just show up at the start. No limit on numbers.

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER CLUBNIGHTS

No suggestions yet. If you have an idea that would be of interest to our members, please let me know on bryan.marsh@btinternet.com.

MIDWEEK RUN REPORT

Will writes:

"Don's first post-lockdown Midweek Run was quite up to expectation and really quite blue too - Bluebells, wisteria and ceanothus were all blooming.

It was Norman who inspired this little offering with his use of the expression "Ne'er-do-well" and subsequent comment on preserving the usage of such older words and phrases.

Thus primed, as we approached one of the junctions on the route it occurred to me that I could see a particularly fine example of a godcake.

Is this a name used in this part of the world?

My thanks to Norman and an echo of the almost inevitable question - "What's Will on about now?"

Upcoming local events

See previous issues (available on the website) for details of Motofest '21 at Shuttleworth on Sunday, 21st Jun, Classic Stony on 4th July and the Flitwick Lockdown Car & Bike Show on Sunday, 1st August.

Details were also sent out by email for the Vintage Vehicle Rally at Page's Park, Leighton Buzzard on Sunday, June 27th. A few members contacted me to point out that this is also the day of the ever-popular Luton Festival of Transport.

David Sparkes informs us of another worthy event:
Pirton Classic Vehicle Show, Thursday, 12th August

"Our Rotary Club will once again be organising the above event, although it clashes with our Beds. VMCC evening.

Pirton Recreation Ground, Pirton, near Hitchin, SG5 3PX, is the venue, £5 entry fee, bar refreshments, and music. All profits to Rotary charities.

Our advertising flyers will shortly be distributed to local garages etc. I will bring some to our July meeting in Shefford.

The Pirton show is from 15.00 to 20.00 so perhaps some members might take in two events in one day.

Talk about Busses all coming at once!"

Sounds like a perfect day – afternoon and early evening at Pirton, then a short hop up the A600, or through the backroads, to the Noggin & Natter at Shefford.

Tin Balls

NEIL CAIRNS

Neil relates a letter he recently wrote to Old Bike Mart

Subject: Spitfire Fuel Catalyst advert

Dear Editor,

I wrote some weeks ago over a fraudulent advert you were carrying in

the OBM. You did not reply. I told you I had complained to the ASA about its content. The ASA have now told the company to remove it as they are unable to prove any of its claims. ASA ref 'A211101056'.

Similar rubbish has appeared over the years under other product names such as 'Black Cat', 'TFC', 'Spitfire Fuel Catalyst' and 'Fuel Diamond'. If anyone really wants to believe adding tin balls to a petrol tank, they can drop in a few bits of tinman's solder costing a few pence, not the £25 often asked. No manufacturer is going to spend a fortune on hardened steel exhaust valve inserts, removing items with tin in from fuel systems (i.e. using plastic floats not two half-pressings for a float soldered together), etc. when they could just drop a bag of 'Rare Earth Metals' into the tank.

Maybe one of your investigative reporters could do an article on these Snake Oil Salesmen? (Not me!) Copy of the advert and a letter I wrote to the Royal British Legion magazine editor last year, attached.

Neil Cairns.

SHOULD YOUR CLASSIC ENGINE RUN ON LEADED PETROL? ?

The Spitfire Fuel Catalyst

allows any engine that should run on leaded petrol 1936-1987 to run on normal 95 unleaded

- No additive needed
- No new engine parts need to be fitted
- Simply drop into your petrol tank, guaranteed for 10 years
- Raises octane
- Lowers burn temperature
- Lubricates engine valves
- Stops fuel going stale
- Protects against ethanol damage. up to fuel tank size 3 gallons £15, 5 gallons £20

BUY DIRECT FROM THE MANUFACTURERS

Ways to order CHEQUE f/o A. GRAHAM
PAYPAL formulapower@hotmail.co.uk

VISA/DEBIT PHONE **01403 754173**

The Old Milking Shed, St Johns Farm, Brooks Green,
Near Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0JN

CALLERS WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT

Neil's original letter to the RBL magazine:

I'm very sad to see that you have been taken in by an advert that has been around since the 1980s, purporting to be all things to all engines. On the inside back-cover of the January 2018 issue of 'Legion' we are told of the benefits of a very dubious product. This 'tin-balls' idea arose in the 1980s and was advertised in many car-motorcycle related magazines. So impressed was the 'Practical Classic' magazine in the 80s (still being sold) that they obtained an old Austin 1800 and put the product into its petrol tank. It was a disaster (valve seats burnt out in less than 300 miles). Back then the 'tin-balls' were supposed to protect the exhaust valve seats of old cast-iron engines when unleaded petrol arrived. It did not. (They claimed back then that the tin had protected the exhaust valve seats of the RR Merlin engines fitted to Spitfires sent to Russia in WW2. Alas, the RR Merlin engine is made of magnesium

alloy with screwed in hardened steel valve seats that were designed to cope with incandescent gasses. They claimed the tin also raised the octane rating of the poor Russian fuel.) The product was sold as little metal balls in a plastic net bag to be dropped in the petrol tank. Later, once many car magazines had barred their adverts, it re-appeared as 'Black Cat', an in-line petrol fuel filter that acted by catalytic methods to improved fuel economy and engine performance. When Ethanol was added to petrol they then claimed the tin would protect fuel systems for the effects of this powerful corrosive stuff, which ate the tin out of the solder that held float-chamber floats together. It did not. It has now re-appeared as 'TFC', metal pellets made from "rare earth metals" (tin, lead and zinc) as you see in the advert in the Legion magazine. Because few car-motorcycle-etc magazines will take their adverts, they are now targeting less technical outlets.

If tin balls (or pellets) are so good, why do not the manufacturers of their engines not add them to their petrol tanks? Why go to the expense of machining cylinder heads and fitting hardened steel inserts in the exhausts if a tin ball will protect them for a few pence? Note I say pence. You can put similar 'tin balls' in your tank for about 50p, just cut up some solder from the garage. And why one needs to buy different amounts for engine sizes is amazing, as they say themselves the balls/pellets last forever. It is the fuel they claim to treat so it matters not if one gallon or 50 gallons pass over the tin balls, totally irrelevant to engine size.

Its an out and out con-trick. Save your money. I attended a Classic Car Spares Event at Stoneleigh some years ago and a chap was selling these tin balls, claiming to prevent valve-seat-recession (unleaded fuel burning away the exhaust valve seat). He quoted the Russian story (the latest add says 'Hurricanes', not 'Spitfires' as they found out no Spitfires were sent to Russia) and I stood up and told him about the RR Merlin engine being of Magnesium alloy and the valve seats being of hardened steel. He had no reply and his audience drifted away. It seems the manufacturers of this Snake Oil franchise its sales out, so protecting themselves from the ASA.

If the product does work, I sincerely hope those using it have told their insurance companies of the 10% rise in their engines power output. This brings to the front just how these 'improvements' were measured, and by whom (specialist engineers or an amateur?) The photos are of solder used for joining metal at low temperatures, and how to cut off a few bits to put in your tank for about 25-50p. Their profit margin must be fantastic.

Neil Cairns.
MGCC Y Register Tech Advice.
MG Octagon CC Y Type Tech Advice.
22 Years RAF Engine Fitter.

When inner tubes were tough

TIM KINGHAM

When I was young (this is a "how could I be that young and stupid?" story) I bought a bronze head pre-war Triumph twin, four gearboxes and a spare engine for £15 [Bryan faints]. The bike had been used in Motoball and was bereft of a front mudguard or headlight, but had a green tank, a red frame, and two yellow painted open exhaust pipes that ran the length of the bike, low down (to direct the ball when kicked?). It also sported two hand-cut tyres, the front one had a cross section like three fingers held up and the knobbles were each almost as long as fingers. I guess it was before the MOT but, in any case, I had a nice girlfriend 20-odd miles away, so the Triumph (which I don't think had moved for years) was soon pressed into service, and boy did it go! From 0 to 60mph in a blink of an eye.

On about journey number three, I was accelerating out of Wendover, when I heard a whining sound and, looking down, saw an orange 'thing' flying round alongside the tyre on the front wheel. I slowed down and saw, to my horror, a balloon of inner tube squeezing through the girder forks at each revolution (you tell me when they last made orange 20" X3½" rubber inner tubes!). I stopped and let the tyre down, and the tube retracted into the split in the tyre wall. Now here is the real wonder: that tyre without air was still rigid; it was so old it was almost like ebony. I

never blew the tube up again, so it stayed that way for the summer. I know in the Autumn I sold the bike for £30 - good profit!

The page 3 girl



Sand and Motorcycles

CHRIS ILLMAN

No, I am not referring to the local event in Leighton Buzzard.

This relates to a very different event that is anything but local! For those who don't know, my motorcycling competition escapades began back in the early 60's when I got into Grass Track. My earliest involvement was as a Sidecar Passenger, providing ballast for a number of well-known South Eastern Centre charioteers. After a couple of seasons, I fancied having a go on solo's and started out with a MOV Velocette, progressing through the classes with various engines ranging from Ducati, BSA & Suzuki. I finally concentrated on the 350 & 500 classes using J.A.P.s in Erskine & Elstar frames.

In the 60's, you could race every weekend throughout the season as there were that many Club's running Grass Tracks in Kent, Surrey & Sussex that, sometimes, there were two or even three meetings on the same day. As a result, I rarely had the need to venture outside the South Eastern Centre.

One of those rare occasions that I did ride out of Centre was when we had the opportunity to enter what was billed as the last ever Sand Race to be held on Pendine Sands in 1970. Clearly an opportunity not to be missed, myself and a few friends prepared our machines for what would be a very new experience. As an aside, this was about the time that my pal and I had built a unique outfit, based on the principle of a 'Leaning Sidecar'. The idea was that it could be ridden as a solo with the passenger, in this case me, riding pillion. It could be leant at an angle of 45 degrees in the corners! The concept worked well, in fact so well that

the ACU banned it the following year!

And so, with machines prepared, we embarked on the long trek into the depths of South Wales. If you have ever been to Pendine Sands, you will be aware of the torturous roads that have to be navigated to reach the Sands. If you have never been, you should add it to your bucket list as you will treading in the footsteps of the good and the great of Record Breaking. Just being on the vast seven-plus miles of sand is so atmospheric that you can almost hear and smell the likes of Bluebird and Babbs! Anyway, the Sand Race was a great experience and a highlight of my competition up to that point. It was all the more poignant as it did turn out to be the last such event on Pendine Sands.

However, moving on almost 50 years, rumours began circulating that Pendine Sands would once again see motorcycles on the beach. Again, another opportunity not to be missed!

Not a Sand Race, this time, but a full-blown Records Event for a variety of Classes over a number of distances, the Kilo, Mile, 1.5 Mile and 3 Mile. It was being supported by the ACU and the UKTA and new records were there for the taking.

I decided that I would enter the 3-Wheeler Class my 1966 500cc Booth Matchless Sidecar. This machine was the one that took two World and five British Records at the '66 Records Meeting held at Elvington Airfield, with Frank Booth riding and 132lb of compulsory lead ballast. I was very fortunate to acquire this machine some 30 years ago.

Normally used for ¼ mile Sprint/Drag events, I immediately figured that given that the normal Top Tube fuel tank, which holds approximately ¾ gallon of 50/50% of Methanol/Nitro mix would not last any distance greater than about ½ mile. I decided that I would supplement the normal tank with a Greeves Griffon fuel tank. This gave me a total capacity of around 2½ Gallons so I figured that I would be able to just get to the end of the three-mile distance! Only time would tell if I would end up having to be towed back from the far end?



Because it is such a big investment in both time and travel, I thought that I might as well also have a go at some solo records, so I also prepared my trusty 1930 500cc Rudge normally used by my son Mark for Sprinting. Running straight Methanol, it's a pretty quick machine over the Quarter Mile. How it would fair over longer distances was a bit of an unknown!



Having prepared everything, my wife and I set off for the long and tedious journey to Pendine Sands. Travelling separately, was fellow Section Member, Ian Dentith and his wife. We arrived on the Thursday before the weekend event and the weather was looking quite good.

Now some local Pendine Folklore states that the best and smoothest sand conditions occur after a storm! Folklore or not, this turned out to be true as the Friday night before the two-day meeting was some of the wildest conditions I have ever experienced. The motorhome was parked at the top of the paddock, which was in the field adjacent to the local Museum of Speed. Some other friends had turned up with a large gazebo which was erected next to the motorhome, and firmly anchored to an adjacent fence and tethered other vehicles with rope and tie wraps, and our machines safely stored inside. To cut a long story very short, in the middle of the night I thought the motorhome was about to blow over!

At around 3am, there was a loud banging on the door, and it was suggested that I might want to come outside. I got outside just in time to witness the gazebo taking flight and it launched into the air, finally coming to rest behind the security fence that separates the Museum carpark from the MOD land next door, but not before hitting another competitor's VW van and cracking the windscreen!

Saturday morning finally arrived and, although we had had very little sleep, the calm after the storm had indeed left the sand beautifully smooth. Conditions were just about perfect, or at least they would have been had it not been for two things. While we waited for the tide to recede far enough to set up the course, we were notified that an unexploded shell had been washed up by the storm. Not an uncommon occurrence apparently as the MOD use Pendine as an ordnance testing ground! The MOD promptly dealt with it as, apparently, they have had lots of practice!

Secondly, it was discovered that a large number of gigantic jellyfish had also washed up overnight! And I really do mean GIGANTIC! These things were about 3 foot across and about 9" thick! After some dragging, the jellyfish were moved to allow a Kilo Course to be set up for the morning session and we lined up for our crack at this distance. I began by running the Matchless Sidecar with a 30% Nitro mix. I took it fairly easily just get a feel of things and did just a whisker under 100 mph, but it felt good. Next, I took the 1930 Rudge to the Start line, much to the amusement from the modern plastic rocketship brigade which made up most of the entry.

At this point, it's worth sharing what it is like to ride fast on damp sand. Well, the best way I can describe it, it is akin to riding on virgin snow. Some things to point out here is that it is advisable to disconnect the front brake and that there is no point in riding like it is a drag race. You just sit on the line digging yourself into a big hole! The technique is simple: a slow start, preferably in second gear, gradually building up speed with small throttle increments, leisurely or even ponderous gear changes, get it into top gear and then just concentrate on keeping it straight! That last bit is the tricky bit as the bike tends to wander about depending on the sand density and any ruts left by the previous throttle happy competitors!

Despite being on an 85-year old bike (as well as a 70-year-old rider on board!) I managed to put in a run at 104 mph over the final measured ¼-mile. I was pretty chuffed with that, given that the vast majority of 'moderns' didn't seem to be getting much above 90 mph! "That can't be right" they squealed and cried foul! "The timing gear must be wrong as my speedo was showing 120!" What they couldn't get their head around was that it was mainly their riding style, which was resulting in massive wheelspin, even when approaching 100 mph! In truth, multi-cylinder machines are far from ideal on soft surfaces. In contrast, a big thumping single is much more suited.

I finally managed a satisfying run at just over 111 mph on the Matchless Sidecar once I had upped the Nitro to 50%, and quickest on the Rudge was a whisker under 108 mph on straight methanol. Over the next two days, we tried all the distances except the three-mile distance because, as a result of the storm, there was an underground river that turns the sand to a soggy mess which the locals call "porridge" but "quicksand" to you and I!

After a very satisfying, albeit an incredibly tiring one, it was time to load up and head for home. All told, I came away from Pendine with seven

Class Records, all of which currently remain intact five years later.

Venue: Pendine		Date/Time of run: 25/05/2015 13:32:41	
STRAIGHTLINERS			
Class leader:		Chris Illman	107.967 mph
Rider Information	Run Details - Run no: 7		
Name:	Mile/Flyer -	M	
Chris Illman	Direction -		
Number:	Speed	107.967 mph	
310	Position -	1st	

It's worth mentioning that although the records were achieved over the Kilo, 1-Mile and 1½-Mile, in all cases I could achieve maximum terminal speed within the Kilo distance, so over the longer distances, I didn't see the point in holding it on full throttle for the whole distance so, at all distances, I only really cracked it open in the last Kilo!

All in all, a most enjoyable event that I would love to do again. However, I am still finding sand in all the nooks and crannies on the bikes. You will appreciate that a decent air filter is pretty essential.

If the opportunity ever arises, don't hesitate to have a go – just don't use your Pride-and-Joy, Concours machine!

Not sure if you can embed a Hyperlink into the Newsletter but there is a YouTube video of the Matchless on a run. It's a bit shaky but worth a quick view, especially with the sound turned up!

[Pendine - Matchless outfit - YouTube](#)

If that doesn't work, copy this link – it's well worth it [Bryan]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kL9fPNe_gM

The Ring Clamp's Tale

WILL CURRY

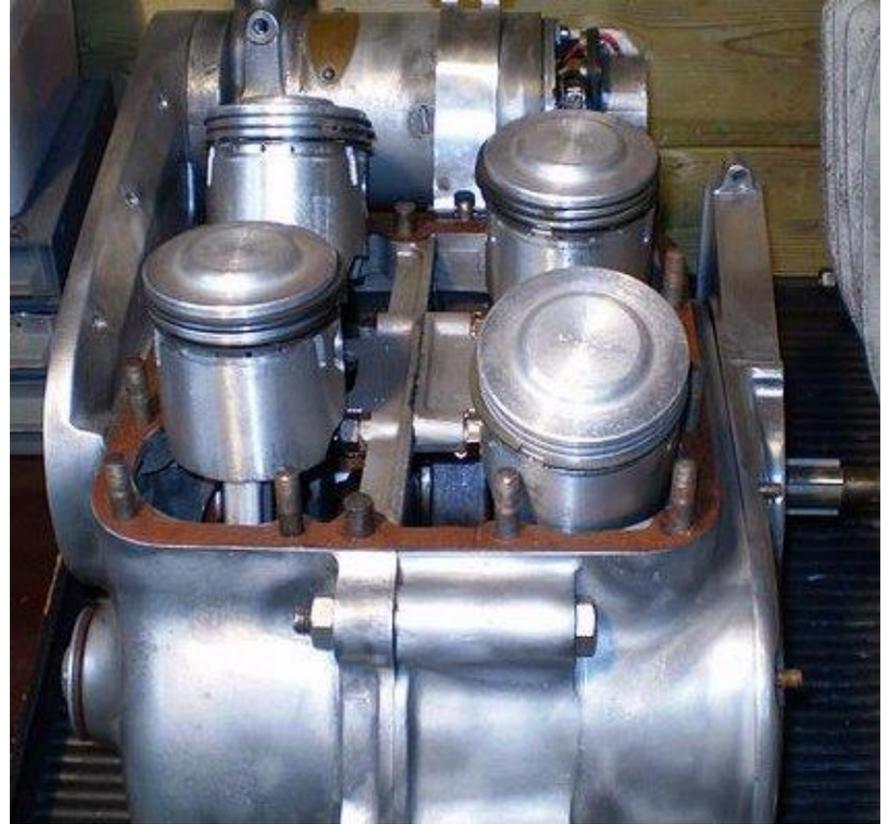
To some people we're just another bit of dumb metal to be chucked under the bench and to lie, unheeded, until another crisis descends. Others are more careful, providing a hook for each of us or a nice corner of a shelf where we can watch and listen to workshop life. Just because we're dumb doesn't mean we don't notice.



Four ring clamps awaiting the call, a clock still on GMT and a corn cross - surely the home of a Square Four owner.

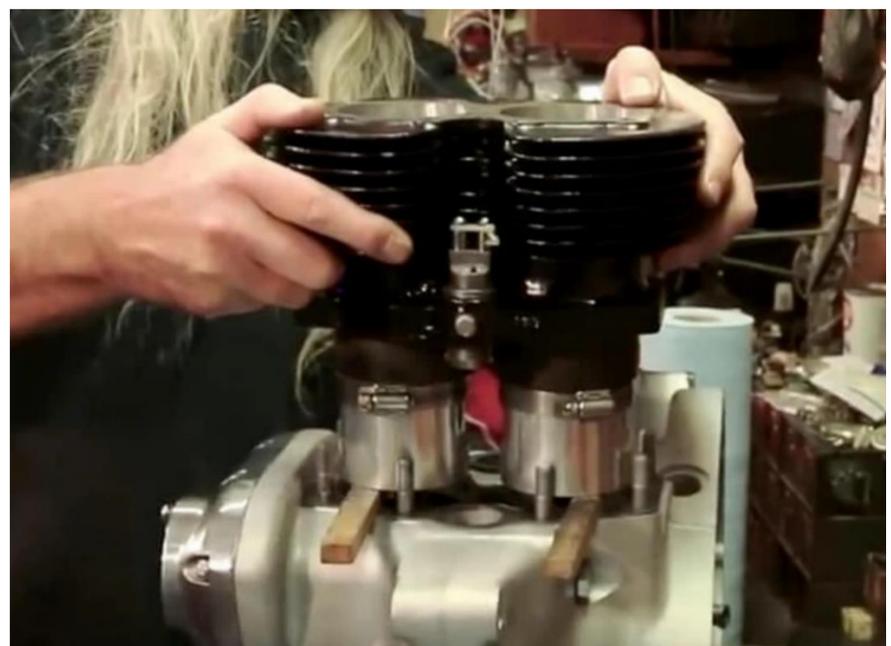
There's four of us, bought 50-odd years ago when Fred the Square Four turned up. Fred came in a number of packing cases and much disassembled. A Square Four with the barrel off has been likened to 'a pot of daffodils but with pistons'. If you think getting the pistons into

the barrel of a parallel twin is fun you should try a Square Four. Not only are there four to go at, two are up and two are down and it matters which ones you start with. Get it wrong and you can't get the last ring clamp out from under the barrel. It only took two goes to get Fred's barrel back on that first time. Fred's been apart twice since then and both times without drama.



Not quite daffodils...

However, the main subject of this tale isn't Fred, it's a Triumph twin. Village life has its advantages and drawbacks and this tale starts with one of the latter. He was regular at the pub over the road and wanted his son to have all the things he didn't and that included a T110. This he duly purchased for only a little over its true value and after running it up announced that his son would be decoking it to get it going at its best. Above the crankcase mouth it might have been T110 but otherwise it was all Thunderbird. The top end was stripped from the engine and the lad was left on his own to work out what to do. He and his mates must have managed most of it but were thwarted by putting the barrel back on over the piston rings. After some discussion and explanation two of us were loaded to the son and his mate.



How it should be done

At this point it's worth explaining a little more about the niceties of replacing a Triumph twin barrel. There are, usually, two dowels which are offset to the drive side of the crankcase mouth. These stop the barrel from being fitted back-to-front. The awake will notice them before needing to find out quite why the barrel won't fit properly over the studs. Second and better in many ways is the fact that there is nothing holding the cam-followers into the tappet blocks. Quite when they slide out and how much of a fuss they make as they do is all down to luck. If you're really unlucky it might be a long time before you realise they've deserted.



Notice the cable tie holding the cam-followers in place

The engine was reassembled with our help to hold the rings in place and lots of gasket cement as everyone knows the propensity of British motorcycles to leak oil. That wasn't going to happen - he'd never hear the end of it his dad. There was a lot of talking and debate as to what to do next and how to do it. It must have been a big learning experience. Some of what was learned may have been correct.

We were returned without us getting to hear the engine run. It was kicked over often enough but it didn't sound right - even a dumb ring clamp could tell all was not well. There were plenty of thanks, as there should have been and a question: "Why can't we get the pushrods to fit properly? They seem to go in too far".

Like the Terminator, I knew we'd be back.

Badge Engineering

DON MCKEAND

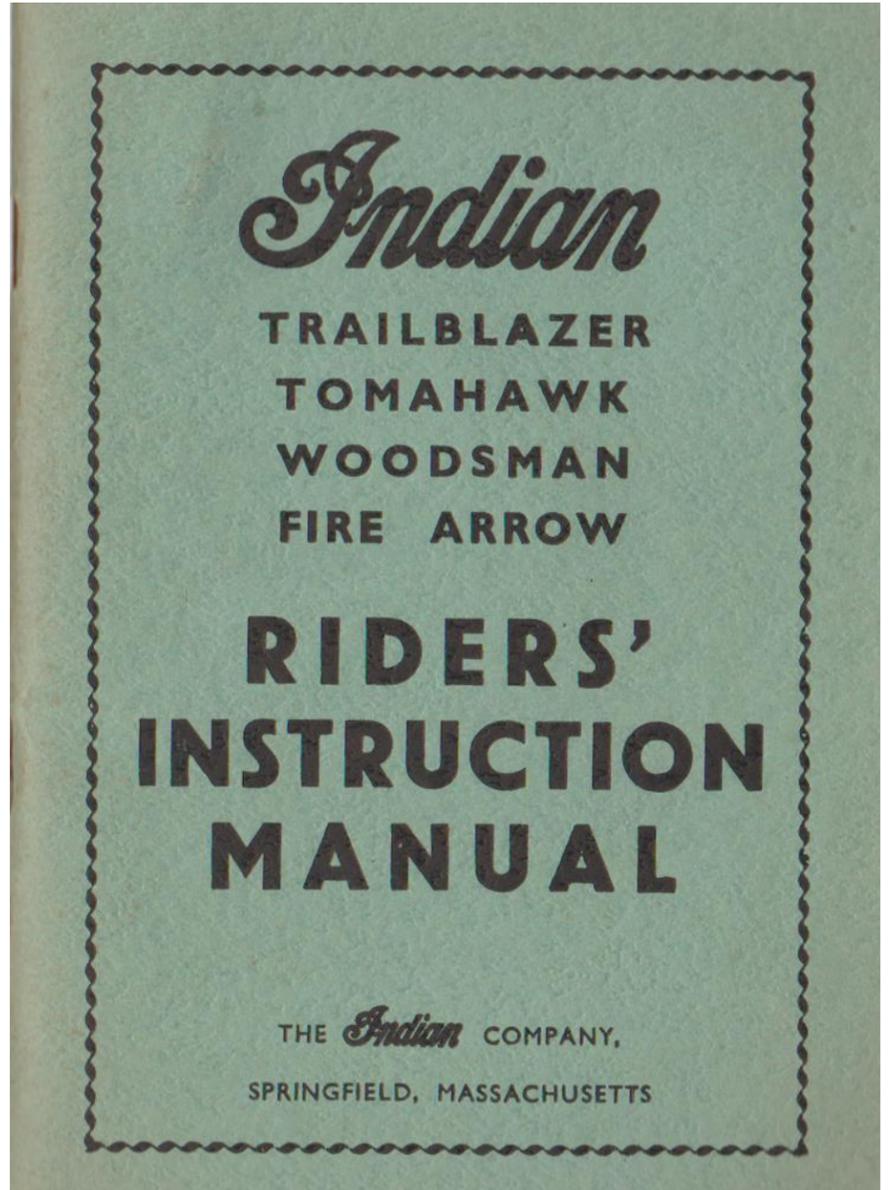


The page 3 girl in Newsletter 35 [reproduced above] is "riding" a rather interesting bike. It is an Indian Tomahawk, although in the UK we would probably have known it as a 500cc Royal Enfield Meteor Minor. It all came about when the Indian Motorcycle Company got into financial difficulties in the late 1940s and was bought by the Brockhouse Engineering company of Southport in 1951 (see Chris Sawyer's article in issue 35 about Welbike/Corgi which ended up being manufactured by Brockhouse).

Initially, Brockhouse sold a variety of British bikes in the USA including Vincent and Royal Enfield under their manufacturer's brand and model names as well as Brockhouses' own product - a 250cc side-valve bike which they sold as the Indian Brave.

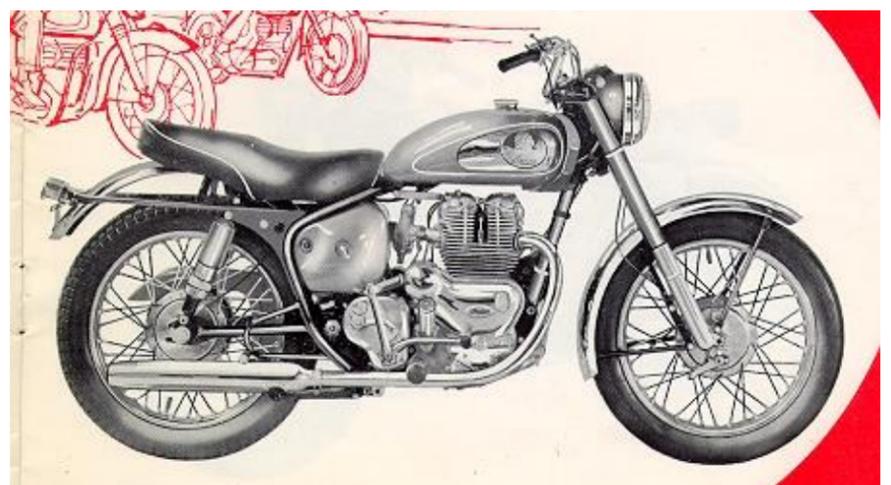
In about 1955 Brockhouse established a relationship with Royal Enfield to sell variations of the Enfield range badged as Indians. Initially this

was the Trailblazer (700 Meteor in the UK) Tomahawk (500 Twin in UK), Woodsman (500 Bullet in UK) and Fire Arrow (250 Clipper in UK). There was not much to distinguish them from home market models apart from the Indian script logo on the tank sides, higher handlebars and separate headlights in place of the "casquette" combined headlight and top yoke. All except the Tomahawk, which was the only one in the range to keep the casquette throughout. In fact, the only real differences from the home market Meteor Minor or 500 Twin were the tank badge and larger wheels on the Tomahawk.



Cover of 1955 instruction manual – looks all-American, but "Printed in England by North View Press, Coventry" on the back cover gives the game away

The range expanded until, by 1957, there were seven models being advertised. By this time the tank script had been replaced by a circular pressed metal badge with an Indian's head design, and in 1959 no less than 11 Royal Enfields badged as Indians appeared in the US Indian catalogue. This included one model significantly different to what was available in the UK, which was the Chief. Based on the 700cc Constellation engine and frame it had a gearbox unique to this model. The wheels were on 16" rims with 5" "balloon" tyres, which necessitated new, wider fork yokes, wider and longer swinging arm and wider mudguards (sorry – fenders). The new top yoke had an instrument panel to house the enormous Stewart Warner speedometer and a General Electric headlamp on a special cast alloy pillar.



1959 Tomahawk, from the Indian catalogue

If you thought this story was convoluted enough, it was due to get a further twist. In late 1959 or early 1960, AMC took over the Indian sales and started badging Matchless models as Indians, but the Royal Enfield-built Indian Chief continued to be sold as such by the new owners of the Indian name. I have seen the original Royal Enfield factory dispatch registers where a batch of over 100 Chiefs in December 1960 has the destination shown as "Ass. Motorcycles Ltd." In 1960, and subsequently, Royal Enfield continued to sell motorcycles in the USA, but under their own name and with UK model names.



1961 Indian Chief – note the AMC toolbox!

So, coming back to the page 3 girl, the bike is a 500cc Tomahawk from either 1958 or 1959 with the Meteor Minor engine, casquette and pressed metal tank badge.

Word Search – the solution

As promised, here's the solution to the Wordsearch puzzle in the last issue. The twenty British motorcycle manufacturers buried therein were:

ABC, AJS, Ariel, Bown, BSA, Calthorpe, Greeves, Humber, James, Levis, Matchless, Norman, Norton, Panther, Premier, Raleigh, Rudge, Sunbeam, Triumph, Vincent

M	E	T	I	R	C	R	M	N	E	R	E	R	A
N	I	N	E	A	A	N	B	O	B	E	U	T	V
B	O	W	N	L	L	A	T	T	B	H	E	A	I
T	A	A	O	E	T	M	S	R	A	T	G	S	N
R	A	A	R	I	H	R	N	O	R	N	D	J	C
I	B	B	E	G	O	O	V	N	I	A	U	H	E
U	C	A	C	H	R	N	M	I	E	P	R	C	N
M	T	O	M	I	P	A	T	T	L	B	R	J	T
P	P	N	G	R	E	E	V	E	S	S	E	H	P
H	E	U	C	B	E	S	S	E	I	A	I	U	E
E	M	O	N	B	T	B	I	T	V	R	M	M	E
A	A	U	L	E	V	I	S	N	C	O	E	B	T
E	S	J	A	M	E	S	N	L	M	L	R	E	T
B	E	S	S	E	L	H	C	T	A	M	P	R	T

Seen on Ebay

Currently on sale, for a not unsubstantial starting bid, is an original 12-page programme for the 1913 Luton Hoo Motorcycle Speed Trials, in remarkably good condition but with the inevitable rust stains from the staples. The rear cover carries an advert for Clarke's of St Albans.



SEEN IN THE PAPERS

FIRE AT SWAN HOTEL STABLES. AN EXCITING HALF-HOUR.

Shortly after half-past nine on Friday evening a fire broke out at the Swan Hotel stables, in High Street Leighton Buzzard, but was so promptly dealt with that only for a short time was there any danger of serious damage to Messrs. Barclay's Bank and other important business houses adjoining. The stables have been used for the storage of military motor cycles. They also contained straw for the hotel horses, and a large quantity of hay in the loft above, and the fire was caused by a match thrown down by a soldier after lighting his bicycle lamp. The match set fire to some petrol that had been escaping unnoticed from a motor cycle for some time, and almost immediately the motor cycle was enveloped in flames. Flaming petrol also ran along the floor, setting fire to the straw and soon finding a way to the hay loft. In the meantime the soldier had given the alarm, and while the police and the Fire Brigade were being telephoned for the ostler and the boots, helped by the soldier and an officer, did their utmost to check the flames. The heat and smoke were almost unbearable but they stuck to their task, and when the Brigade arrived some minutes later it was found possible to confine the fire to the building in which it had started. More than once, however, it seemed as though flames would get the upper hand, and it was only the arrival of more help and the use of a good supply of water that saved the situation. In the early stages of the fire the ostler did very effective work in smothering the flames with a couple of rags. Meanwhile the boots flooded the hay loft with buckets of water at very great risk to himself. Once he fell down the loft ladder, fortunately without injuring himself seriously. It is estimated that some 36 trusses of straw were spoilt by the fire and water, and that about a ton of hay was also destroyed. The loose boxes and the roof of the stables were badly scorched, but the billiard room in the same building was not damaged. The motor cycle, which caught fire, was much damaged, but is not beyond repair. Valuable help in removing the straw to a place of safety was given by a number of soldiers.

[North Bucks Times and County Observer - Tuesday 10 August 1915]